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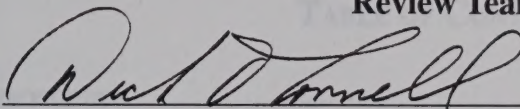
AVIATION PROGRAM STRATEGIC REVIEW

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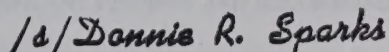
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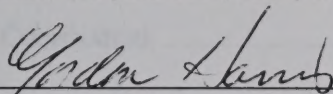
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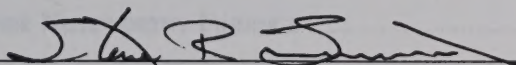
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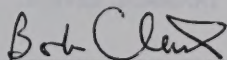
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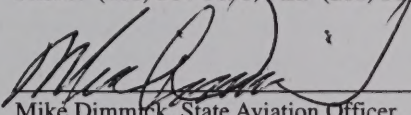
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I. INTRODUCTION

This report contains the results of a programmatic review of the Bureau's aviation program. This review was initiated by the Director of the Office of Fire and Aviation and was conducted August 17 through September 21, 1995. The review team was an interagency team composed of managers and technical experts in the fields of fire and aviation management: participation from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) included a District Manager, State Fire Management Officer, State Aviation Officer, and a staff member from the National Office of Fire and Aviation; from the Office of Aircraft Services (OAS), a Regional Director; and from the USDA Forest Service (FS), the National Aviation Officer. Team members are listed on the opening page.

II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this review was to assess the Bureau's aviation activities, with the focus on managerial, administrative, and organizational aspects of the aviation program. In addition to responding to areas of concern identified by the users, the following specific general objectives were given:

- Funding and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) outlook; options to maintain a viable aviation program with appropriate staffing levels.
- Adequacy and understanding of aviation program goals and objectives.
- Appropriate definition and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various offices.
- Opportunities for interagency integration of aviation functions.
- Aviation safety oversight practices and procedures.

The information-gathering phase of this review was conducted through an informal survey sent to a cross-section of aviation users, aviation managers, fire managers, and line officers. This survey was sent to 73 individuals, from State Directors to on-the-ground aviation users in the BLM, as well as aviation managers and aviation specialists from cooperating agencies. The response to this survey was overwhelming, both from individuals who were sent the survey and from numerous other individuals who submitted unsolicited responses. In total, 83 survey forms were completed and returned to the team. This information was supplemented with personal interviews conducted by team members. Although the team was unable to address in depth all the concerns and issues brought forth, the major significant issues were identified and appropriate corrective actions requiring prompt action were developed. In most cases, the team has addressed major areas where full implementation will require further staffing and development of a detailed action plan; where specific action can be clearly identified, it is so stated.



III. SUMMARY

This review revealed that there is considerable confusion about the aviation management organizational structure, organizational roles, and individual roles, primarily relating to the National Office. Coupled with this confusion is a need for improving customer service at the national level. Many of these concerns may be caused in large part by inadequate and untimely communication throughout the aviation organization both from the top down and from the bottom up. More than half of the recommendations contained in this report deal with defining or modifying the organizational structure, improving communications, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and improving customer service. Throughout the report, where general reference is made to interagency efforts and/or integration among BLM, OAS, and FS, other cooperators will be included as appropriate.

Aviation safety is of concern to everyone in the fire and aviation community. This report recommends that BLM immediately fill its national aviation safety position and take steps to consolidate BLM aviation safety with the OAS and FS aviation safety programs to create a single interagency function. (See Finding B-1, page 8.)

The BLM's aviation program was found to be underfunded and understaffed. The review team recommends that aviation funding be officially merged into the fire program budget and that staffing and funding requirements for aviation management be incorporated into Fire Management Activity Planning. Fully funded aviation positions would provide support for all non-fire aviation operations except where a non-fire program workload justifies dedicated aviation management, e.g., Alaska Cadastral Survey and Nevada Wild Horse and Burro program. Considering current availability of FTE, sufficient FTE to adequately support the aviation program should be nationally allocated. (See Finding C-1, page 10.)

The air attack/leadplane operation is in need of immediate attention. It is not as operationally effective as it could be and does not have clearly defined objectives or operating procedures. The team's long-term recommendation is to combine the BLM and FS air attack and leadplane programs. In the short term, however, the BLM programs should be restructured into a national pool. (See Findings E-1 & 2, pages 17-19.)

The review team looked at two aspects of BLM helicopter operations: the rappel program and the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide. This report recommends that BLM not undertake or continue to pursue rappel activities; any proposal for deviations from this policy would require specific approval by the Director of Fire and Aviation. (See Finding F-1, page 20.)

Most users of the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide are confused about whether it is "policy" or "guidance." Recommendations are to clarify policy via official communications and to revise the document so it is consistently interpreted and accepted by all Federal and State cooperators. (See Finding F-2, page 21.)

Aviation management workload and qualifications at the State level in BLM are of concern to many managers and users. The review team has recommended that vacant State Aviation Manager positions be filled immediately, that State Directors take advantage of opportunities to zone aviation functions within BLM and/or integrate functions with other agencies, and that qualification standards be established for aviation managers at all levels. (See Findings G-1 & 2, pages 22-23.)

There are two major themes throughout this report: 1) BLM must consider all opportunities to integrate its aviation functions with those of other agencies; and 2) aviation specialists, managers, and users at all levels, within both BLM and our partner agencies, must be involved in resolving the issues raised in this review. As new and ongoing interagency studies are conducted, it is critical that BLM have full representation and participation. This representation must include field-level users, technical specialists, and management.



IV. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. NATIONAL OFFICE OF FIRE AND AVIATION

1. Finding - Mission, Roles, and Responsibilities:

The mission, role(s), and responsibilities of the BLM National Office are either unknown, ill defined, or perceived as misdirected, according to most respondents outside of the National Office.

Discussion:

National leadership can only be effective when its mission, role(s), and responsibilities are understood at all levels of the organization. Most national-level respondents seem to have a clear understanding, but many respondents from all other levels of the organization are either confused, uninformed, or misguided in their view of the BLM aviation program mission and the National Office's role and responsibilities; many feel there is considerable duplication of efforts between OAS and BLM. The BLM aviation program mission needs to be clearly defined and successfully communicated to all organizational levels. The mission statement should be supplemented by an Aviation Management Plan that includes a brief description of each function (position) and the National Office's role and responsibilities, reflecting the field's needs for support, policy, and direction.

Recommendation:

A BLM committee comprised of National, State, and District Office personnel (including a cross section of line managers, users, and aviation specialists) draft a revised BLM aviation mission statement, along with an Aviation Management Plan that reflects the needs of the field at State and District levels. That plan should be widely distributed and communicated to all organizational levels.

Mission Statement - January 1996; Aviation Management Plan - March 1996.

2. Finding - BLM National Office Staffing, Organization Structure, and Roles and Responsibilities:

The BLM National Office is perceived as being ineffective due to confusion about function and authority, organizational structure, and role(s).

Discussion:

The National Office role and its involvement with policy and operations has been inconsistent. There is a great deal of confusion about the organizational structure within the National Office of Fire and Aviation and the reporting structure and responsibilities of individual positions in the Aviation Group. There is a feeling



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that the National Office's primary focus is to acquire aircraft and pilots rather than to provide program leadership. Several respondents also questioned the validity of the chief pilot position and the incumbent's responsibilities and performance. There are a wide range of interpretations of this position's duties; it has been referred to in writing as Chief Pilot, Fixed Wing Specialist, and National Aviation Officer, and no one in the field is sure what its actual function is. Many responses indicated there is not enough presence in the field and, although the staff is technically astute, it is not operationally cognizant, lacking direct involvement and interest outside of the BLM fleet aircraft operations. Several respondents said the staff was spread too thin, and some indicated disappointment in apparent lack of BLM leadership on several key national interagency issues, e.g., Interagency Leadplane Operations Guide, Aerial Fire Fighter Study, phase 2 of Interagency Airtanker Study, etc.

The National Office, while having professional and qualified personnel, may not have the appropriate mix of qualifications, adequate level of staffing, or properly defined functions.

There are numerous interagency opportunities for shared resources, integration of functions, and cooperative agreements that have not yet been fully explored or implemented.

Recommendation:

Form a team led by the National Office of Fire and Aviation, with participation from BLM field offices and cooperators to:

- a) Perform a workload analysis, based on the Aviation Management Plan and with field involvement, to determine if staffing is adequate and has the appropriate mix of expertise to perform the functions required of a National Office, considering the geographic coverage and variety of operations. Specific attention should be given to ensuring adequate program emphasis on rotor wing operations, fixed-wing operations (contract and fleet), aerial delivery systems, and safety. *April 1996.*
- b) Specifically review and adjust the functions and responsibilities as necessary for the following positions:
 - Aviation Management Specialist (sometimes referred to as the Chief Pilot). Determine whether this position should be an operational position (pilot) or should focus on national direction, policy, and program management. (An associated issue is the number of pilots available for full crew coverage of fleet aircraft.) *April 1996.*



- Program Assistant (Aviation). Determine whether this position should be redescribed to better meet office and field user requirements. *April 1996.*
 - c) Review the Aviation Group Leader position to ascertain whether active flight currency and proficiency should be required. *April 1996.*
3. Findings - National Office Effective Positions and Job Performance:
- a) Al Alvarez has been highly effective and visible at the field level, responding to assistance requests and taking leadership in his program areas.
 - b) Sam Harpham has been effective in his position as maintenance manager for fleet OV-10 (Broncos) and C-23A (Sherpas).

Discussion:

A number of respondents specifically named Al Alvarez and applauded his efforts in supporting the field's needs and his interagency involvement in key issues. It was indicated that the centralized maintenance approach for the fleet of BLM-operated aircraft, under the direction of Sam Harpham, is working well and is a logical and cost-effective way to do business.

Recommendations:

- a) Continue these two areas as they are currently operating. *Ongoing.*
 - b) Review aviation staff performance elements for all National Office aviation positions and consider adding field visit and functional assistance performance as a critical job element. *March 1996.*
4. Finding - BLM In-House Fleet Management:

Some aspects of the BLM fleet management are working well and some are not.

Discussion:

The smokejumper aircraft fleet management, with aircraft and management assigned to the Alaska Fire Service (AFS), and the Great Basin aircraft with management based at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) are both working very well. The Lower 48 OV-10 program management is viewed as being somewhat "loose," with the aircraft and pilot assigned to States and distributed across a wide geographic area. Several responses indicated an apparent lack of coordination with these aircraft. Many responses praised Alaska's overall fleet management, with the OV-10's and C-23A's both falling under the AFS centralized management



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structure, and specifically cited the quality of AFS program management. This indicates that the two differing management philosophies should be scrutinized to see if the AFS system and philosophy will work nationwide.

Recommendations:

- a) Review the decentralized concept for distribution of aircraft to certain states (OV-10's in Nevada, California, Arizona, Idaho, and Alaska and C-23A's in Alaska and Idaho) and consider a centralized organization with distribution determined on an as-needed basis for mission accomplishment with a centrally located and managed pilot pool. *October 1996.*
- b) Explore the potential to place all Smokejumper aircraft under one program manager who would be responsible for scheduling, training, and general management of the program. *October 1996.*
- c) Refer to the Air Attack/Leadplane findings, discussion, and recommendations (Section E) for recommendations relative to OV-10 aircraft. *October 1996.*
- d) Facilitate a study of the concept and viability of interagency pooling of all national fire aviation resources. *June 1997.*

5. Finding - Communications:

Communications between the National Office and the field are inadequate.

Discussion:

From the responses to the survey, it appears that communication of both critical and routine messages is inadequate. The problem may be in both directions. The National Office may be viewed as nonresponsive or unconcerned about field needs and support due to lack of or untimely information at the field level. It may also be a case of State Aviation Managers not passing information on to field users. Several responses indicated a lack of recent information. Examples include limited or no knowledge of the National Air Tanker study and perceived lack of BLM input, lack of knowledge pertaining to the Public Aircraft Law (Pressler Bill), lack of knowledge regarding the Twin Otter two-pilot issue, and the perception that the BLM is not providing input into critical interagency policy decisions.

Recommendation:

- a.) Include State Aviation Managers in Fire Management Officers' (FMO) weekly operational and monthly general business conference calls. *Immediate.*



- b) State FMO's initiate regularly scheduled conference calls with District fire and aviation managers. *Immediate.*
- c) Institute a process for ensuring regular feedback from the field to the National Office concerning management of the aviation program. One option is an annual customer survey similar to the one utilized in this review. *Annual.*

6. Finding - Customer Service:

Many users are concerned that National Office aviation staff are not available when needed.

Discussion:

A need was expressed for the National Aviation Staff to demonstrate a stronger customer service ethic and to be more available to respond to inquiries, especially during normal office hours or during periods of high activity. It was noted that it is especially difficult to contact technical staff on Fridays. A strong need was expressed to be able to contact individuals immediately, even during off hours, when critical responses are needed or aviation operations are occurring. Routine use of voice mail rather than having personnel available in the office is viewed as unacceptable during normal working hours.

Recommendations:

- a) The Aviation Management Group Leader establish an office schedule that will ensure an appropriate number of staff members are available during established office hours to provide prompt technical assistance and program guidance. When specialists are in travel status, they should maintain regular communication with their office. This is especially critical during the field season and/or other periods of high aviation activity. *Immediate and ongoing.*
- b) An aviation duty officer concept should be established to respond to requests at all times throughout the year. The duty officer should know the whereabouts and how to contact all staff members at all times. The primary telephone number for the group should be answered by a person rather than voice mail at all times during normal office hours. This should be coordinated among the Staff Assistants within the Office of Fire and Aviation to ensure maximizing efficiencies for the entire office. *Immediate and ongoing.*



B. AVIATION SAFETY AND REVIEWS

1. Finding - Aviation Safety:

Many respondents see opportunities to strengthen the BLM aviation safety program and make it more pro-active.

Discussion:

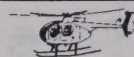
The majority of field respondents recommended BLM place a very high priority on improving the overall aviation safety program. They also indicated a strong desire for a more visible presence in the field from a national-level safety representative. BLM currently does not have a dedicated full-time Aviation Safety position.

Aviation safety is handled primarily as a collateral duty throughout the BLM organization. Greater synthesis and cooperation with the FS and OAS safety programs, both at the Geographic Area/State and national levels, is viewed by many as an efficient and economical approach, particularly if the national safety position is not filled. This concept is already working in some States and is yielding positive results. Expanding this approach into areas such as incident and hazard reporting systems and the combining of data bases would strengthen the safety programs in all three organizations. The integration of aviation safety standards, guidelines, and procedures would also enhance interagency cooperation in the field. Geographically based interagency aviation safety councils would provide an opportunity to identify roles and responsibilities and address regional issues.

Incident/accident trend analysis is a vital part of any safety program. The BLM and OAS do not get this critical information down to the user level where accidents happen. Joint sharing of incident/accident information and dissemination of that information to the field in a timely manner is critical to prevention.

Recommendation:

- a) The BLM, OAS, and FS form a work group to develop an implementation plan for integrating and consolidating the three aviation safety programs. Group should evaluate the options for optimizing the physical location for this activity and consider combination of fire and aviation safety. Other cooperators will be encouraged to join in this effort. (This will complement work to be accomplished under Finding B-1 on page 12.) This plan is to be presented to the National Fire Aviation Coordination Group for approval action. *Group should begin work immediately, with full implementation by October 1, 1996.*
- b) Establish and fill a full-time national position whose primary responsibility will be aviation safety. This position would be the BLM's member of the interagency consolidated aviation safety program. This position would



coordinate with cooperating agencies, assist field offices with ongoing operations, and provide feedback and oversight as part of an active accident-prevention program. *April 1996.*

- c) Merge the incident and hazard reporting programs of the Department of the Interior and FS into a single system and data base designed toward simple and timely dissemination of information back to the field. *Immediate.*

2. Finding - Aviation Reviews and Evaluations:

Aviation safety and technical evaluations are not well coordinated or consolidated to maximize efficiency and minimize disruption at the local level.

Discussion:

Aviation program evaluations are conducted at several levels of the BLM organization and various other agency and interagency entities. Some are mandated and performed by the Department, BLM National Office, or the Forest Service, functional or readiness reviews are performed or guided by program leaders or local geographic interagency alliances. Some respondents expressed frustration over multiple reviews looking at the same issues and suggested better planning and coordination that would meet objectives through the fewest possible visits and least possible disruptions to program activities.

The success of accident-prevention programs is difficult to measure and therefore difficult to fund. BLM's current Aviation Management budget (\$1,390,000) is approximately equivalent to the cost of two or three accidents. This program must be appropriately funded and staffed in order to be efficient and effective.

Recommendation:

- a) Designate a point of contact within the National Office to coordinate and, where possible, consolidate aviation reviews and evaluations on an inter-agency basis. If this is already in place, make sure the procedures are followed and the process remains active. Ensure regular feedback to reviewees. *January 1996.*
- b) Share successful program management techniques with other offices through regional councils and the use of a recognized medium, e.g., "Bear Air" (FS aviation newsletter) or "Straight and Level" (BLM aviation newsletter). One focal point should be identified to maintain a common document and keep it current and pertinent. Ensure all aviation managers have easy access to accident-prevention information and techniques. *Immediate and ongoing.*



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C. FUNDING AND FTE

1. Finding:

The Bureau's Aviation Program is chronically underfunded. This, coupled with real or perceived Full Time Equivalent (FTE) restrictions, has resulted in a critically understaffed BLM aviation management program at the National, State, and District levels.

Discussion:

The BLM's Aviation Program has undergone several funding scenarios, ranging from a working capital fund to a dedicated subactivity and last year being incorporated within the general "administrative" activity. None of these funding methods provided anywhere near the level of funding required to even meet minimum program management and oversight responsibilities for this high-risk activity. In reality, without major financial subsidy and management support from the fire program, the BLM aviation program would not exist at any functional level. It is time to address this reality up front and officially merge the funding of the aviation program into the fire program budget. This would require that justification for staffing and funding of all National, State, and District aviation managers be incorporated into the Fire Management Activity Planning (FMAP) - Most Efficient Level (MEL) for each office. These fire aviation positions would provide support for all non-fire aviation operations on a contributed-services arrangement at a level equal to or greater than current support. The only exception to this would be where a non-fire program has a sufficient workload to support dedicated aviation management for its specific activities, e.g., the wild horse and burro program or cadastral survey in Alaska. In these cases, the benefiting activities would fund their own requirements. The FS currently funds their aviation program in this manner.

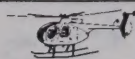
With this funding arrangement, we believe we will be able to support full-time aviation managers where justified by the aviation workload.

With the personnel cuts resulting from budget reductions in other activities, there is currently adequate existing FTE at the Bureau and Department levels to cover required staffing, as long as funding is consistent and predictable. Now is the time to allocate FTE and staff to meet the critical needs of the aviation program, based on the Aviation Management Plan.

Recommendations:

- a) Reprogram existing aviation funding allocations (FY 96, subactivity 1820, in the amount of \$1,390,000) into the fire preparedness subactivity. *No later than FY 97.*

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- b) All States update and revise their FMAP's and MEL funding levels to fully support their specific aviation staffing and workload requirements. This should include an analysis of some dual-hatted positions. *January 1996.*
- c) The National Office of Fire and Aviation will adjust the FY 97 budget justification to reflect these funding levels. *Immediate.*
- d) This funding scenario and resulting staff development work shall be accomplished by the National Office of Fire and Aviation Group Leaders for Financial & Budget Management and Aviation Management, in concert with the BLM Budget Office (WO-880). *Effective 10/1/96.*



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D. COOPERATORS

1. Finding - BLM/OAS/FS Mission, Function and Inspection Redundancies:

There is considerable redundancy in the three agencies' missions, functions and inspections.

Discussion:

The general feeling in BLM field offices and the National Office is that there are now some opportunities to combine functions in varying degrees. A high percentage of respondents pointed out that many operational and management functions, missions, and roles are being duplicated among OAS, BLM, and FS. Recommendations ranged from formation of and total integration into a National Interagency Fire and Aviation Service to interagency integration and cross-utilization of functions in specific areas while retaining individual agency identities. The aviation staffs could take better advantage of each other's strengths and eliminate duplicative efforts. There are immediate opportunities in training, safety, technical specialties, and aerial attack systems.

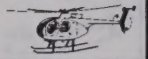
Recommendation:

Establish an interagency task group (BLM, OAS, and FS at a minimum), including management, policy, and operations personnel, to examine the following elements. Results of this effort will be submitted to the National Fire Aviation Coordination Group for approval action. *May 1996.*

- a) The concept of establishing integrated operations with specified mission responsibilities at each or all of the National, State, and Geographic Area levels. Aspects to be considered are program benefits/disadvantages to each agency, changed workloads, program and mission focus, management structure, cost savings, and potential management and operational effectiveness.
- b) Functions and authorities of a national multi-agency aviation management team and appropriate delegations of authority.

2. Finding - OAS, BLM, FS Mission-Checkride Relationship and Functions:

A higher level of fire-mission understanding and expertise rests with the BLM and FS than with the national OAS office. This is particularly true because of current attrition in the OAS.

Discussion:

Many of the observations and comments received from the field are that there is (or at least a perception of) a lack of fire mission operational expertise (with some exceptions) within OAS for checkride authorities as is now required in the Departmental Manual (DM). A significant number of responses also indicated that there are no obvious provisions for providing training and experience for the level of expertise that should be available from the BLM and OAS National Offices. Note: an interagency decision has already been made to establish an interagency process for inspections/checkrides. The following recommendations are intended to facilitate implementation of that decision.

Recommendations:

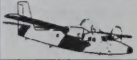
- a) The OAS, BLM, and FS (other agencies as appropriate) meet to establish procedures for full cooperation in establishing interagency inspections/checkrides by persons fully qualified to perform those functions, regardless of agency affiliation. *March 1996.*
- b) Make appropriate changes to the DM to reflect that Interagency checkrides and other inspections for special-use missions may be accomplished and fully recognized on an interagency basis. *April 1996.*
- c) Establish and maintain an interagency master list of fully qualified checkairmen and inspectors for all special-use activities, with designations of those missions they are qualified in. (The FS currently maintains a list of interagency checkairmen and inspectors.) *April 1996.*
- d) BLM and OAS establish a plan to integrate newly hired pilots and aviation technical experts into training and operational programs, requiring full mission qualification prior to giving them checkride and inspection authorities. *September 1996.*

3. Finding - State Aviation and BLM Cooperative Ventures:

There appears to be very little opportunity for cooperative ventures with State organizations other than those currently in place.

Discussion:

Although some States where BLM operates have significant aviation programs, most respondents felt there was little opportunity to integrate operations other than closest-resources support; however, the AFS (State of Alaska and BLM) works well and may be a model for other efforts. The Public Aircraft Law (Pressler Bill)



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has restricted the potential use of State cooperators on project-type (non-emergency) work. It is also significant that OAS and FS cooperator standards vary, making interagency carding/approval of some State cooperators very difficult and resulting in confusion and inconvenience among users.

Recommendations:

- a) The BLM facilitate a task group (OAS, FS, and other appropriate agencies/bureaus) to establish interagency minimum cooperator technical standards for all fire-related and other special mission activities that cross agency lines. *April 1996.*
- b) Update and revise policies, regulations, and procedures to reflect the changes resulting from recommendation "a." *October 1996.*
- c) The BLM continue current and seek further cooperative programs with States as opportunities arise. *Ongoing.*

4. Finding - National Fire Aviation Coordination Group:

The National Fire Aviation Coordination Group (Dunton, Hurd, and Chambers) has proven to be an effective group, promoting and enhancing interagency standardization and cooperation.

Discussion:

Overall working relationships have improved significantly among OAS, BLM, and FS over the past 18 months. Interagency standardization and cooperation in most aspects of the respective aviation programs is consistently improving, with a cooperative attitude being displayed by most management and operations personnel.

Recommendation:

Maintain the National Fire Aviation Coordination Group's charter and continue efforts to improve standardization and cooperation.



5. Finding - Contracting Process:

The contracting process for obtaining both fire and non-fire aircraft and related support services and the differences in administration which stem from two contracting sources (OAS and FS) continues to be a significant source of frustration and aggravation for many "end-user" customers.

Discussion:

The differences, both real and perceived, in aviation contracting methodology, work-up, language, and payments makes it very difficult for many managers and users to achieve the desired integration and cross-utilization at the field level. The award process, which is focused on low bid and often viewed as not adequately considering past poor performance, is of concern, especially where missions are of an emergency-response nature. Short-term procurement instruments and procedures (rentals) need to be interagency, simple, and administered at an organizational level that best supports the quick-response and short-term intent of this procurement alternative. Customers want an interagency contracting process that uses common vocabulary, standards, administration, and oversight. There is value in and support for specialization by organization (for example, Interior handling transport aircraft and FS handling air tankers) as an interim step toward full integration of the two contracting entities.

Recommendations:

- a) OAS and FS expedite a Memorandum of Understanding (currently in draft) to "blend" areas of common aviation services at the national level. *Immediate.*
- b) BLM, OAS, and FS draft, circulate, and get customer input into a plan to consolidate the contracting function. *April 1996.*
- c) Agencies rekindle efforts to share aircraft inspection duties and enter into a mutual agreement during FY 96 that addresses joint scheduling of aircraft inspections and field visits. *Immediate and ongoing.*
- d) Place more emphasis on development and utilization of interagency automated programs to enhance user services. *Immediate and ongoing.*
- e) The BLM strongly encourage the OAS and FS to develop a contracting procedure for full integration of these functions. Priority should be placed on having one procurement document per aircraft and a universal use rate. Where existing contracting law or policy obstructs accomplishment of this goal, appropriate changes should be pursued.



6. Finding - Aviation User Training:

There is confusion and misunderstanding within BLM as to what aviation training is mandatory for various positions/tasks and who can and should provide this training.

Discussion:

There is general concurrence concerning the positive value of aviation user training. There is some disagreement and confusion, however, about how, where, when, and by whom this instruction is best delivered. It is also important to ensure that mandatory aviation training requirements are realistic and commensurate with the responsibilities and associated level of risk and exposure for each given position. The division of roles and responsibilities between OAS and the Bureau is not clearly defined, and opportunities for sharing and consolidating training are being missed.

The Departmental Aviation Safety Trainer (DAST) program is seen as efficient and cost-effective; however, it would become even more valuable if the FS were included. This, along with the development of interagency regulations, guidelines, and techniques, was encouraged by many respondents.

Recommendations:

- a) Initiate a joint forum among the BLM, OAS, and FS to explore additional opportunities for joint training, identify lead and support roles, and establish quality assurance requirements. *March 1996.*
- b) BLM, OAS, and FS jointly develop a common training analysis process that addresses needs and accomplishment. One agency should be responsible for maintaining this program. *July 1996.*
- c) BLM, OAS, and FS jointly develop and implement a method of recognizing on-the-job performance and relating it to both training needs and instructor qualifications. *Ongoing.*

Note: As this is an ongoing effort, the National Aviation Management and Safety Group Leader will be responsible for monitoring and ensuring that these recommendations are accomplished.



E. AIR ATTACK/LEADPLANE OPERATIONS

1. Findings - Short-Term:

The existing program is not meeting user requirements.

- Significant unnecessary differences exist between the FS and BLM air attack/leadplane programs.
- The BLM air attack operation is not a defined program but, rather, a loose conglomeration of aircraft, pilots, and air tactical group supervisors (ATGS), with no central coordination or management (with the exception of the Alaska Fire Service).
- Most ATGS duties are being performed collaterally.
- The OV-10 is an outstanding aircraft for both leadplane and air attack work.
- There is currently a critical nationwide interagency (BLM & FS) shortage of air attack and leadplane aircraft and pilots, which, with no defined replacement/training plan, will significantly worsen in the next few years.
- Utilization of existing air attack resources is neither efficient nor well coordinated.
- Standard national operating procedures are not established.
- In some instances, work is being done with unqualified personnel and aircraft.

Discussion:

The air attack/leadplane operation is clearly in need of immediate attention and refocusing. This is one of the most critical and high-risk fire suppression tools we have. With the exception of a few individual local programs, BLM does not have a cohesive, operationally effective national program with clearly defined objectives and operating procedures. Over the long term, the only practical solution is to fully integrate this program with the FS, with the end goal being a national interagency air attack/leadplane program that will provide services to all Federal and cooperating States' wildland fire organizations without jurisdictional limitations (see discussion under Finding 2, Interagency Long-Term).

Recommendations:

Immediate actions to be taken by the BLM are both short-term and long-term. In the short term, the BLM must immediately address this issue and have the basic decisions made and implementation initiated *prior to 1996 fire season*.

- Restructure existing elements of the BLM air attack/leadplane program, placing management, aircraft, pilots, and air attack bosses (ICS ATGS - Air Tactical Group Supervisors) into a nationally managed pool similar to the Alaska Fire Service's successful air attack program and the BLM smokejumper program. One option may be to consolidate all existing



BLM AVIATION PROGRAM STRATEGIC REVIEW

resources into a centralized location and prepositioning to the States on a preplanned basis for operational control and management.

- Establish an ad-hoc team to fully explore this recommendation and develop an implementation plan by *February 1996*. This team should be led by a State Fire Management Officer and include experienced air attack personnel and pilots.

The team's work should be based on the following guidelines:

- Program will be fully integrated, including dedicated aircraft, pilots, and air attack bosses.
- Program will be operational by May 1, 1996.
- Staffing and funding requirements must be delineated.
- Requirements of user States must be fully met.
- Prepositioning schedule to be developed with State FMO's.
- Aircraft preventive and scheduled maintenance requirements will be addressed.
- A detailed personnel development and recruitment plan and standards for pilots and air attack bosses (ATGS's) will be developed prior to August 1, 1996 (Note: normal time span required to qualify a new leadplane pilot is 1-3 years, dependent upon previous fire experience).
- Program will be a dispersed operation and controlled by the geographic area during fire season, with the goal of having a complete air attack/leadplane package at each base that has a contracted airtanker.
- All OV-10 air attack pilots will be fully qualified leadplane pilots.
- National utilization efficiency must be maximized.
- Overall management of program will be vested in a single position that reports directly to the National Office of Fire and Aviation. Team will recommend a location for headquartering this program.



2. Finding - Interagency Long-Term:

The specific items identified in Finding #1 of this section are essentially identical and apply to the interagency program as well.

Discussion:

While both the Bureau of Land Management and the FS have separate jurisdictional lands and responsibilities, the mission is the same and the lands are dispersed and contiguous and/or intermingled. Maintaining two separate aviation operations, management structures, and fleets of owned and/or contracted aircraft is neither economical nor efficient. The question of air attack versus leadplane is really a combination of fire complexity, air traffic congestion, aircraft types, terrain, visibility, and population density (urban interface). On some fires, primarily initial attack and small fires, an air attack/leadplane operation in a single aircraft is optimal; larger more complex fires normally require both a leadplane and an air attack in separate aircraft. The philosophies for use do not and should not vary.

Recommendation:

Develop and enter into an agreement with the FS and other cooperating agencies for joint management and operation of the dedicated air attack and leadplane fleet, pilots, and air attack personnel (ATGS's). This agreement should capitalize upon and integrate the current strengths of each organization and should be developed prior to *September 30, 1997*, with implementation targeted for the *1998 fire season*.

The following should be considered in developing this agreement:

- Air Attack - The BLM's excellent foundation of air attack aircraft and program management experience would facilitate their assignment as lead for this element of the program.
- Leadplane - The FS organization is large and diverse enough to facilitate the leadplane pilot development and training as well as being overall lead for the this element of the program.
- The air attack and leadplane elements would each operate under the guidance of an interagency board.
- Personnel, equipment, aircraft procurement, and operational and maintenance requirements should be jointly funded on a fair-share basis for both elements. These components should meet National requirements. Existing personnel and equipment in these activities should be fully integrated into the new program. The program and its two elements should be collocated to maximize efficiencies, coordination, and consultation.



F. HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

1. Finding:

In the past few years, the Bureau has conducted two pilot rappel programs (California and Colorado) to evaluate the suitability of helicopter rappelling to meet the needs of BLM resource and fire management activities. The final outcome of the pilot programs has not been determined. Other helitack operations have also discussed or initiated rappel activities.

The California pilot program remains operational; Colorado is not currently pursuing a program.

Discussion:

Initial overview of the California and Colorado programs shows the rappel program is used predominantly for extended-attack situations. Building helispots and accessing rough terrain seem to be the primary uses thus far on BLM fires. FS rappel programs are more active in initial attack.

BLM rappellers have been used to support cooperators' needs to a large degree. It appears that the equipment and personnel standards are the same for both agencies. The rappel program is a high-risk program with significant start-up and ongoing operational costs.

Recommendation:

- a) Establish the following as interim policy: The Bureau will not continue to pursue the rappel program. Any BLM office desiring to initiate or maintain a rappel program must request an exception to this policy from the Director of Fire and Aviation. This request must clearly document a cost-benefit analysis and risk assessment to justify a rappel program. This policy would not prohibit BLM employees from participating in an interagency or cooperator's rappel program. *Immediate.*
- b) Finalize the recent analysis of the BLM rappel pilot program. The final report should include an economic analysis and should tie in closely with the National Aerial Delivery of Fire Fighters study statistics. *November 1, 1995.*
- c) Make a decision to either accept or reject specific programs based upon the final analysis report. If there is in fact a BLM need for rappel services, consider whether the FS can provide rappel services to meet BLM needs or consider a combined interagency approach, with BLM supplying some of the personnel and equipment. *November 15, 1995.*



If the decision is made to establish a rappel program, BLM must provide adequate funding to ensure that quality equipment and professional training is maintained at all times.

2. Finding:

Significant confusion exists concerning application (policy versus guidelines) of the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG). Although the document is an outstanding product, the physical size of the IHOG makes it cumbersome for field use.

Discussion:

It is unclear to many aviation managers and basic users how Directives, Manuals, Handbooks, and other guidance interrelate. The IHOG is one example of guidance that has been adopted as policy by the BLM and FS. Other agencies have adopted the IHOG as "guidance"; the confusion occurs when "guidance" from a handbook or guide is treated or adopted as policy. Even though we may issue these documents under Instruction Memoranda, the field users are not getting a clear message about their application and order of compliance. This issue is compounded by poor communications in some areas.

Recommendations:

- a. Policy adoption or changes should be issued via Instruction Memoranda.
- b. Policy elements must be established in the appropriate Manual Sections.
- c. Convene a committee composed of both technical expertise and management, with interagency involvement, to clearly segregate mandatory operating procedures (policy) from guidelines. These mandatory elements must, at a minimum, be acceptable to all Federal users and, desirably, most major State cooperators. This committee should also develop and widely distribute a condensed version/executive summary (possibly pocket-sized) for field users. Make all Manuals, Handbooks, and other guidance available on disk or CD. Identify someone to be responsible for maintaining these files. *May 1996.*



BLM AVIATION PROGRAM STRATEGIC REVIEW

G. STATES

1. Finding:

Three BLM State Offices currently have vacant State Aviation Manager (SAM) positions, resulting in critical aviation safety requirements being placed in jeopardy.

Discussion:

SAM positions were created in the BLM in the mid-1980's to ensure compliance with minimum safety standards. Levels of attention and funding were increased following two accidents in 1986. Respondents indicate that funding and attention have decayed to the point where safety is again being compromised. Currently, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah have vacant SAM positions; all three have been vacant for over a year. At the same time, cooperators, especially the FS, are increasing their attention to aviation safety. This is causing "interagency cooperation" to default to the FS.

Recommendation:

States should fill vacant SAM positions (as an interim measure, strongly consider the use of detailers). It is anticipated that proposed changes to aviation funding arrangements in FY 1997 will alleviate the funding problem (see Section C).
Immediate.

2. Finding:

There are opportunities at the geographic area level to integrate and or zone state aviation workloads.

Discussion:

State Aviation Manager positions are currently funded in the 1800 activity and are considered to be Management of Lands and Resources (MLR) positions. MLR positions (FTE) and funding are declining; this causes State Directors and other line managers to fill and fund positions based on need and priority. Even though managers recognize the need for fully qualified SAMs, staffing problems and other issues prevent either the filling of vacant SAM positions or filling the position with a fully qualified individual (also see Finding 3 below). The concept of zoning aviation functions on an intra- and/or interagency basis within geographic areas should be seriously considered. This concept has been informally discussed but not implemented in BLM.



Recommendation:

State Directors should consider zoning or integrating aviation functions. This should occur within, rather than across, geographic area boundaries. This would facilitate training, geographic area aviation teams/issues, sharing of resources, etc. Line managers must ensure that sufficient funding and appropriate delegations of authority accompany zone or interagency arrangements. *Immediate and ongoing.*

3. Finding:

The Bureau does not have minimum training and qualification requirements for aviation positions. At least one State (Alaska) has draft requirements.

Discussion:

Use of aircraft poses risks that are not inherent in ground transportation. The State Aviation Manager is responsible for ensuring that these risks are mitigated and that required Departmental training is completed. Nearly two-thirds, or 63 percent, of respondents indicated that aviation positions were not filled with the best qualified individuals (or they didn't know), and 90 percent indicated that minimum qualifications should be established.

Recommendation:

The National Office will lead, with participation from the field, an effort to develop standards for State Aviation Managers, District Aviation Managers, and aviation staff members in the National Office. Standards (knowledge, skills, and abilities) must include both aviation and wildfire operations. The priority order of development is (1) State (*January 1996*), (2) District (*February 1996*), and (3) National Office (*April 1996*). These standards will be implemented as soon as they are developed. In cases where incumbents do not meet standards, management must specifically address the issue with a full range of options as each individual situation warrants: escalated training and experience opportunities, details, and reassignments. All aviation positions should have fully qualified incumbents *within a maximum of two years*.



V. OTHER NOTEWORTHY FINDINGS:

While these findings do not merit detailed discussion and recommendations, they nevertheless should be brought to management's attention:

1. The Department, in conjunction with the FS, has changed its policy and procedures regarding the inspection of aircraft that only provide point-to-point transportation. This change was implemented to eliminate duplication or perceived duplication of FAA functions and responsibilities.
2. Field visits by National Office personnel increased dramatically in 1995; this should continue.
3. The A-76 process has shown that Government-owned and -operated aircraft are both fiscally responsible and operationally efficient.
4. The smokejumper program as currently managed, staffed, and operated is meeting customer needs. Fleet configuration for this program should continue to be evaluated and upgraded on a routine basis. As discussed in the Air Attack/Leadplane issue, there is also a critical shortage in the number of smokejumper pilots. Due to excellent management of this program, this shortage has not been apparent to the field users but is nevertheless of concern and needs management's attention.
5. Where the volume of aviation business does not justify a dedicated aviation management position and "dual-hatting" is appropriate, it is critical that the incumbent is available to attend to aviation requirements. The mix of functional responsibilities is usually the key element that must be taken into consideration to ensure this availability.
6. The need for airspace coordination is growing rapidly. Geographic Areas must continue to pursue the identification and training of geographical representatives to function as airspace coordinators at local levels. A National Office point of contact for airspace coordination will not accomplish the coordination job needed in the field. This must be done by developing local working relationships among the land management agencies, the FAA, the military, and General Aviation. The National Office needs to identify and provide funding support for a focal point with which DOI agencies can coordinate and to attend DOD and FAA airspace meetings and workshops. The individual identified must have a good depth of knowledge and experience in airspace issues and be able to establish and maintain good working relationships with the FAA and military.
7. The resource-funded OV-10 aircraft needs to be upgraded with proper equipment capable of a higher degree of accuracy to meet resource managers' requirements and funded on a dedicated/predictable basis. If either of these requirements cannot be met, this aircraft should be incorporated into the air attack/leadplane fleet. (Contact for specific concerns is Bob Bainbridge, WO-400.)

Appendix I

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 S. Development Ave.
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354

August 4, 1995

In Reply Refer to:
9400 (RP-120)

EMS TRANSMISSION 8/4/95
Information Bulletin No.95-2062

To: Assistant Directors, State Directors
From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation
Subject: Aviation Program Strategic Review

I have requested that a strategic review be conducted for the Bureau of Land Management's aviation program. This review will cover all aspects of our aviation program and require assistance from all states in gathering required information. This review will focus primarily on managerial, administrative and organizational aspects of the aviation program.

The general objectives of the review will include the following:

1. Evaluate funding and FTE outlook and options for maintaining a viable aviation program with appropriate staffing levels.
2. Evaluate and recommend revisions as necessary for program mission, goals and objectives.
3. Evaluate and recommend revisions as necessary of office roles and responsibilities (National, State, District).
4. Evaluate and recommend opportunities for greater interagency integration of aviation functions.
5. Review and evaluate our aviation program safety oversight procedures and practices.

The review team will be composed of the following members:

Dick O'Connell	BLM	National Office of Fire and Aviation (Team Leader)
Bob Clark	BLM	Idaho State Fire Management Officer
Donnie Sparks	BLM	District Manager, Canon City District
Mike Dimmick	BLM	Oregon State Aviation Officer
Gordon Harris	FS	National Aviation Officer
Steve Smith	OAS	Director, Northwest Area

This team will be contacting a cross-section of users, technical specialists, and managers in all States. In order to keep travel costs to a minimum, most of these contacts will be handled via mail, fax, and follow-up telephone interviews.

Questions or comments relative to this review may be directed to Dick O'Connell at 208-387-5150

Lester K. Rosenkrance
LESTER K. ROSENKRANCE

Appendix II

SURVEY SUMMARY

Bureau of Land Management
Aviation Program Strategic Review
User Survey
August 1995

I. Program Mission

A. The mission of the BLM aviation program is adequately described, understood and being accomplished at the National, State, and District level.

Agree	28	(34%)
Disagree	44	(54%)
Don't Know	10	(12%)

Comments:

- mission is simple - provide safe, efficient aviation services; understanding of mission is problem
- never seen it
- staffing is minimal; leadership, direction, and assistance reflects this
- still fuzzy on relationship between BLM National Office and OAS
- agree with description and accomplishment; would be beneficial to have more info/newsletters about program and some positive notes
- a four year old strategic plan that never was well received nor clearly articulated nor applicable to the mission is all there is
- don't think most people are aware of a charter or mission for program
- conflict exists between States and National Office due to lack of National Office presence in the field
- ill defined and seems headed back to mid 80's
- procure surplus a/c and build a pilot pool
- program is driven largely by desires of a few who want an aircraft fleet
- reorganized so many times, can't keep up
- spread too thin to get message across; Hanks recent visit to Lewiston and Miles City is the type of oversight we need more of
- several vision statements over years, last one wasn't worth reading; old statement included all aspects (admin, operations, training, etc.) needs to be revitalized
- delays in getting out new policy interpretation; e.g. new direction on SIC for SMJ a/c from BLM came over two weeks after received from FS
- too much attention to government owned a/c fleet and not enough to overall program
- mission is described, but not implemented consistently
- not sure anyone has determined what it is
- provide aircraft, maintenance services and flight crews; or provide oversight and management for aviation operations
- unless vision is set at the National level, isn't much chance for States/Districts
- misunderstanding at various levels, but primarily at the National level

II. Roles and Responsibilities of Offices

A. National Office of Fire and Aviation

With regard to the aviation program, the role and function of the National Office of Fire and Aviation is clearly defined and understood.

Agree	27	(34%)
Disagree	43	(54%)
Don't Know	10	(12%)

Comments:

- role and function defined, but implementation is lacking
- OAS continues to get calls on issues from BLM field that have not gone through the BLM National Office and should have
- national role is not clearly defined; authority, states have differing opinions
- not sure what the role and function is; it's vague
- perception of what they should be doing is very different from what the States and Districts feel their role is
- some confusion between AFS Smokejumpers, AFS Aviation and National Office
- not by many
- too much involvement with aircraft fleet, should focus on policy and program direction
- National Office needs to play a bigger role in coordinating and standardizing operations between states
- totally support a separate Fire Service (a la Alaska) on a National basis
- roles of National Office and OAS overlap
- chief pilot position needs to be revisited in regards to role and responsibilities
- why are pilot and maintenance in National Office as opposed to service support-NIFC
- management direction on national offices role, e.g. policy v. operations, been inconsistent
- worry about pilots, a/c acquisition; not much other leadership
- should be more info to resource folks, particularly line officers
- not if you talk to District level users
- program suffers by not having direct line authority over F&A programs at District level
- lack of support and authority by top management; staff can't do their job
- too many layers of management

The quantity and quality of leadership and policy direction provided by the National Office of Fire and Aviation for the aviation program is adequate.

Agree	34	(41%)
Disagree	30	(36%)
Don't Know	19	(23%)

Comments:

- great deal of confusion at top; major issues such as owning a/c, operational requirements v. cost savings, safety goals need top management direction
- confusion on whether role is strictly policy and management vs. field support (operational)
- more managing being done than leading
- direction provided, but leadership is lacking
- quantity is minimal; desire is evident, means lacking
- more face to face contacts; with SD's and ASD's also
- don't forget importance of user input, i.e., IHOG, A-76's
- seems leadership and policy direction from National Office only shows up after a State has done the ground work and program is running
- leadership resides with the States, not the National Office; this shouldn't be the case, but it's fact
- seem to be making the accomplishment of our mission more difficult and convoluted as years go by (IHOG)
- direction on Pressler Bill severely lacking (several similar responses)
- one of the better run programs in the Bureau, but needs more promotion
- reciting DOI regulations is all they do
- attempts at leadership have only succeeded in arriving at overall consensus among states, with 1-2 mavericks still doing their own thing
- loses impact and application as filtered down through organization
- FS seems to take the lead... source of constant embarrassment
- issues raised are often not carried to OAS
- made several requests for assistance with no or minimal response

The quantity and quality of operational oversight by the National Office of Fire & Aviation is adequate.

Agree	25	(33%)
Disagree	32	(43%)
Don't Know	18	(24%)

Comments:

- biggest issue with field; not enough involvement/interest by National Office
- need to get to field where the action is
- spread too thin to go to the field
- recently, the National Office has provided us with good oversight by showing presence at our offices and assisting
- better coordination of OV-10's that are not assigned (97LM after AFS released)
- requested help this summer and got very good support (CO)
- Alvarez has helped a lot (several similar responses)
- no oversight that I'm aware of
- has been excellent (MT)
- technically astute, but not operationally cognizant of the field problems
- don't seem to see anyone from National Office down here too often
- quality of oversight is an issue since those who are in positions are not qualified - now or previously - for the operations over which they have input

Critical aviation concerns in your State/District are receiving the attention they require.

Agree	38 (53%)
Disagree	21 (29%)
Don't Know	13 (18%)

Comments:

- issues receive no action, or are too late for decision
- too many states leaving aviation positions vacant
- too many dual hatted positions
- too much emphasis on being politically correct and ignoring effects of poor management
- relationship with NDF air program is on the rocks and needs help; question of upgrading Stead needs resolved quickly (winter 95)
- Utah has not had an aviation officer for over two years; a situation that shouts watch out
- no real consequence for resource specialists that don't flight following procedures, i.e. S&R costs
- we've tried to exclude them to accomplish the mission
- difficulty ascertaining national policy regarding cooperators' helicopter use requirements
- concern about national study on airtanker bases in the Sierra Front, the results of which have not yet been seen; also causing concern from State of Nevada
- need front end involvement, rather than surprising users and customers, which often comes in the form of a bombshell, that have been erroneous in assumptions, imperious in presentation and counter productive in general
- aviation needs to be in a management, not just a support role; involved in decision making
- largely due to the efforts of our State Aviation Manager

In the general area of customer service, where can the National Office of Fire and Aviation provide more or better service?

Comments:

- having the staff available to respond to questions from the field
- be present now and then at Districts with high aviation use
- hard to get a phone call through to the National Office
- defining who is responsible for what
- streamline policy/info dissemination; provide more direct support to field offices
- quit using safety as reason for keeping regulations and policy books growing; read Ted Putnam, it's human factors that are the problem
- elimination of differences between BLM and FS aviation policies and procedures; remaining differences are unnecessary
- be more aware of day to day field operations
- more involvement in airspace issues
- promote increased use of fleet a/c with various states
- more site visits by key aviation people
- help us get more consistent AA/LP coverage
- push for an improved radio system
- actually do pretty well; put out a lot of stuff, seem to respond to requests for help
- being proactive and involved with the field
- communicate more and be responsive

B. State Office

With regard to the aviation program, the role and function of the State Office (include AFS Manager's Office in Alaska) is clearly defined and understood.

Agree	35	(48%)
Disagree	25	(34%)
Don't Know	13	(18%)

Comments:

- not filling the vacant State Aviation Manager positions shows just how important aviation management is to BLM leadership
- SAM's need to be more involved in operations
- State Office should provide service and assistance to District Offices, in reality they seem to be mostly involved in National issues and are not readily controllable
- not sure I understand organization since no longer part of fire (Oregon)
- confusion in AK (AFS and SO)
- Oregon is changing, current direction is unclear
- state office role is blurred (AZ)
- differs greatly from State to State
- other than safety training provided to the field office, I'm not sure what the State Office does
- role and function of SAM is defined by the individual filling the position
- Arizona SAM position has not been filled

The quantity and quality of communications between the State Office and the National Office of Fire and Aviation with regard to aviation issues is commensurate with your needs.

Agree	29	(40%)
Disagree	14	(19%)
Don't Know	30	(41%)

Comments:

- very poor with regard to keeping in touch or keeping informed; this was discussed, with promise for improvement, but no action
- if national office could only do one thing, would recommend that it increase the communication with the states
- more communication with states is needed
- using informal requests for comments on major issues needs to be replaced with formal correspondence
- communication is in large part to the National Office, not from them
- National Office staff rarely communicates with field pilots and if it does, it is in a highly negative manner
- I don't like the voice mail
- vacant State Aviation Manager positions for several years is an unbelievable shortcoming; I know of several aviation "incidents" that occurred in these states that never received attention
- IHOG good example of National Office not talking to field
- continuous dialog with some, little with others

The quantity and quality of operational oversight by the State Office is adequate.

Agree	30	(44%)
Disagree	28	(40%)
Don't Know	11	(16%)

Comments:

- good in our state (MT)
- improving, but would be more effective if DFMOs worked directly for SFMO
- State Aviation Manager too much in the operation's field of the Districts
- doesn't seem to be much operational oversight by State Offices
- some good, some non-existent
- we really don't need more oversight, we need clarification of policy from National Office; if there is oversight, I don't know about it

C. District Office

With regard to the aviation program, the role and function of the District Manager's Office is clearly defined and understood.

Agree	24	(39%)
Disagree	22	(35%)
Don't Know	16	(26%)

Comments:

- DM's out of loop in decision making
- some DM's involved, others not
- role is clearly defined, but many instances lacking in fulfilling role
- most DM's have little knowledge or interest in aviation program
- defined and understood, just not implemented
- about 180 degrees from reality

The quantity and quality of operational oversight by the District Office is adequate.

Agree	24	(38%)
Disagree	21	(33%)
Don't Know	18	(29%)

Comments:

- as long as we have dual-hatted positions at District level, we will never have the operational oversight required
- no dedicated aviation managers at district level, FMOs dual hatted, line officers not sufficiently involved
- weak
- totally untrue, except in rare cases; District aviation managers cannot be a collateral duty

III. Fire Operations

A. Airtankers

There are adequate numbers of heavy airtankers in the National system.

Agree	42	(58%)
Disagree	14	(20%)
Don't Know	16	(22%)

Comments:

- absolutely not; even in a slow year, we go to contractors for add-ons; in a busy year we go to the military for perfectly useless MAFFS units. Still unable to fill all requests because airtankers simply do not exist in sufficient numbers
- need to address how we use the present airtanker fleet on large fires
- concerned about age of many of the airtankers
- shy of optimum coverage, need 3 or 4 more
- SEATs need to be included in mix (numerous similar responses)
- we should be looking at how well (or poorly) we manage our airtankers
- MAFFS airtankers are a joke (albeit a very expensive one); PR eyewash for the public
- this is one area where the concept of National Resources and effectiveness of the dispatch/coordination system is visible
- one of the most misused and overspent resources; a runaway train with no accountability

My Geographic Area has adequate numbers of airtankers.

Agree	36	(53%)
Disagree	16	(23.5%)
Don't Know	16	(23.5%)

Comments:

- Great Basin has no light airtankers or SEATs
- yes, with severity tanker
- restrictions and weather delays out of JEFFCO significantly decreases operational effectiveness (Colo)
- no heavy airtankers stationed in Utah, although a historical user
- need to look at efficient mix of large airtankers and SEATs
- need more SEATs
- utilization a problem due to rat-holing and decentralized dispatching
- lack of activity in the past two years supports an illusion of adequacy - not supported by traditional activity levels (AK)
- cannot be determined without including State owned and operated tankers

If disagree with either statement, please define numbers and locations where additions should be made.

- 1 large airtanker in Billings (3k); 1 SEAT each at Lewiston and Miles City
- AFS has 2 airtankers, need at least 3, if we ever get a fire season
- waiting for a fire season, so we can find out (AFS)
- southwest 2
- Great Basin 2
- SEATs (or light airtankers) at Grand Junction, Roswell, Battle Mountain, St. George, Twin Falls, Barstow, Prineville to fill in gaps of Type 1's
- 1 Salt Lake City, 1 Cedar City, 1 additional in Boise/McCall area
- Nevada DC-4 (T-65) needs to be upgraded to a DC-7 or comparable
- Great Basin needs 2-4
- two airtankers not enough in Alaska for the area covered
- need one in Battle Mountain
- need 2 additional airtankers in Fairbanks
- BLM needs an airtanker stationed at Battle Mt.
- need 2 additional airtankers, 1 in Ft. Yukon, 1 in McGrath
- SEATs fill the niche nicely but are only made available with severity dollars, with minimal support and short notice; creates shoddy operations, should be contracted and interagency funded

The recently completed Interagency Airtanker Study accurately captured my views and requirements.

Agree	26	(36%)
Disagree	19	(26%)
Don't Know	27	(38%)

Comments:

- study led primarily by FS, no data from BLM used
- didn't look at SEATs
- haven't seen it [numerous similar responses]
- one of the best studies ever done
- hey, someone finally asked me this question!; that says it all.... no one ever asked before
- NATS was our best interagency effort; need to see what Phase II recommends
- Carson District needs only one base - local politics are a mess
- Carson District needs both Stead (as Fed) and Minden (as NDF)
- omitting SEATs was a blatant oversight
- what the study reflects is largely Forest Service needs
- considered cost over service
- did not consider fire history (DOI and State)
- we were not involved in any part of study
- Billings needs a 2450 - 3000 airtanker; we were not asked about this

The new interagency airtanker contract fully meets my requirements.

Agree	25	(38%)
Disagree	9	(14%)
Don't Know	31	(48%)

Comments:

- company spare aircraft requirement needs to be re-instated
- need a mechanic with each A/C
- only if the fire managers are happy
- suspect it will be done the FS way - short on user needs
- administrative requirements do not meet geographic area requirements (AK)
- with shrinking \$, may not be able to afford it

B. Air Attack/Lead Plane Operations

The air attack program is fully meeting my requirements.

Agree	19	(26%)
Disagree	39	(55%)
Don't Know	13	(19%)

Comments:

- what I see is not a program per se, rather it seems to be a loose conglomeration of aircraft and qualified ATGSs that isn't coordinated in any respect
- too much difference between BLM and FS
- serious shortage of qualified air attack bosses (numerous similar responses)
- need dedicated positions with assigned A/C
- chronically short of both air attack and lead planes
- many times when we need the OV-10, it isn't available; when we do get one, it seems like there is always pressure on
- need to be concerned with recruitment/training for future
- need to better coordinate BLM/FS programs and to re-examine entire aerial attack program
- training needs (Nationwide) for ATGSs aren't being looked at by anyone
- very hard to get an AA aircraft
- no single point of contact for aircraft - vendors or states
- apparent that "air attack" means different things to different people and different agencies - confusion lies in air attack and leadplane being thought of as synonymous
- lack of good, qualified air attack folks nationwide
- no standard program
- too much emphasis on lead plane

Do you have any recommendations for improving efficiency of the Air Attack program? Consider aircraft (numbers, types, location); pilots (numbers, training, experience); air attack bosses (number, training, experience). If so, please describe.

- needs to be a focal point with the required experience and qualifications
- need to have a programwide plan
- need team concept; air attack/leadplane/airtankers
- FS Baron's are old and slow
- National Office should take a more proactive role in identifying training needs and locating appropriate available aircraft throughout the fire season - use dispatch system for dissemination of info
- better interagency coordination and standardization needed
- push OAS to get more aircraft carded
- not enough in the national system
- training AABs is costly and time consuming, need 2-3 year lead time
- OV-10 program great for Bureau; need more press on this
- need more air attack bosses qualified and area versatile
- require in-flight simulations in L-48 training
- more use of OV-10's in combined AA/LP mode
- need better management and coordination of OV-10's
- we need an OV-10 assigned to Eastern Montana from July-Sept
- WAE air attack boss positions with dedicated A/C (OV-10's or twins) at major tanker bases
- need 3-4 dedicated air attack bosses season long in NW
- combine FS and BLM into one program (numerous similar responses)
- ATGS task book requirements are too stringent and nitpicky
- need some kind of intermediate rating
- need better over fire patterns - not just stacked at 500' intervals or 5 miles away - 500' should be 1000'
- leadplanes should not be trying to do ATGS duties, even when ATGS goes for fuel
- long past time to recruit new pilots with a fire background
- each airtanker base should have an air attack plane, pilot and air attack boss (several similar responses)
- pilot training and development program is of major concern (several similar responses)
- need only one Instructor Pilot
- no overall plan
- pass/fail simulation training
- OV-10 is perfect aircraft for ATGS/leadplane
- shortages in Air Tactical Group Supervisors (Air Attack Bosses) [numerous similar responses]

Existing policies and operating procedures relative to the air attack program are adequate.

Agree	31	(44%)
Disagree	23	(32%)
Don't Know	17	(24%)

Comments:

- there is no policy that clearly requires or defines use of air attack or leadplanes - guides are loosely followed
- districts see air attack only for large complex air ops, don't see the potential as a fireman in the sky
- need to standardize with FS
- fine in Alaska
- too much variation in policy from region to region and agency to agency
- concerned with use of unqualified personnel (aerial observers) as a quasi-air attack boss
- need use requirements
- need national interagency ATGS use policy
- not applied consistently nation wide
- solely due to State/District efforts
- National level guidance lacking
- ordering decisions, must be made by field not dispatchers

There is conflict or confusion with or between the roles of air attack and lead plane operations.

Agree	35	(48%)
Disagree	25	(35%)
Don't Know	12	(17%)

Comments:

- definite confusion on the ground by IA
- since no policy, no way to be wrong
- more confusion between detection and air attack as situation escalates
- between FS and BLM, yes; air attack and leadplane combined in same a/c in BLM, not approved for FS
- especially in California; CDF has AA, FS has LP, BLM has both in one a/c
- leadplane pilots are claiming to be air attacks, air attacks frequently act as lead planes, helitack foremen and SEATs try to do air attack
- not among knowledgeable folks
- who is in charge
- lead plane pilots tend to overstep their bounds when an ATGS is present
- the confusion is not in direction, but in people who don't want to follow direction or defined roles
- lead plane pilots hesitant on ordering an ATGS when needed
- strong leads can "overpower" a weak ATGS and vice versa
- some LPs want to run the whole show
- in BLM air attack should be primary and lead plane secondary

C. Smokejumper Operations

Do you have any recommendations for improving efficiency of the Smokejumper Program? Consider aircraft (numbers, types, location); pilots (numbers, training, experience). If so, please describe.

- Sherpa's are adequate for time being, but need superior STOL and faster A/C
- Cessna Caravan - certified for single pilot IFR
- efficiency of the program to a large part is dependant upon proper utilization - a District utilization responsibility and not always efficient
- relief crews are a problem every year; consider setting up a roving relief crew for both BLM and FS
- only need 4 smj A/C in AFS as opposed to 5
- explore joint contracts with NIFC and FS (120 day contracts)
- many districts almost have a taboo against jumpers
- relief pilots always a problem
- smaller aircraft more widely deployed
- better coordination in use of SMJ aircraft between AFS and lower-48
- need a heavy cargo/PC a/c (Buffalo)
- review mix of contract v. government owned A/C
- single interagency chute (FS needs to convert to state of the art squares)
- Twin Otter more efficient for altitudes and fields in our area
- preposition more
- use in fall to cover vacant positions of students returning to school
- should be one program (BLM/FS)
- need up-front program for 3 smj a/c available for use in lower-48 on or about July 15 every year
- still have the best program worldwide; don't burden them with more rules and policies

Existing aviation policies and operating procedures relative to the smokejumper program are adequate.

Agree	46	(71%)
Disagree	5	(8%)
Don't Know	14	(21%)

Comments:

- agree, except for 2 pilot on Twin Otter issue
- need to look at Great Basin jumper agreement and how it relates to the dispatch/coordination system
- transport aircraft limitations, i.e., second stage climb rates not acknowledged by all
- Simula seats a good example - no justifiable need
- avoid interagency fiascos like R-4 Twin Otter pilot deal this year

D. Helitack Operations

Do you have any recommendations for improving efficiency of the helitack program? Consider aircraft (numbers, types, location); pilots (numbers, training, experience). If so, please describe.

- need more mediums or L-3's and fewer 206B's
- make BLM helicopters part of regional/national pool (control)
- institutionalize the FS type II efficiency program
- joint contracting
- we have 3 DOI light helicopters located very close together (Ft. Haus, Lame Deer, ODW) which are managed within their political (administrative) boundaries - very inefficient
- high altitude medium helicopter (CO)
- medium at Carson City good move
- need for more Type II (medium) helicopters with rappel capability - less dependance on CWN
- rappelling seems to have become popular in recent years, seems to have created a life of its own
- add rappel training and capability to all medium helitack crews
- forget rappelling, latest firefighting fad; very limited usefulness
- rappelling program in California needs to establish an interagency policy group to develop equipment and procedures

Existing aviation policies and operating procedures relative to the helitack program are adequate.

Agree	42	(62%)
Disagree	14	(21%)
Don't Know	12	(17%)

Comments:

- IHOG has solved all problems
- IHOG is cumbersome and ridiculous - a guide not policy
- IHOG has helped but needs simplification
- existing policies and operating procedures (read IHOG) are unnecessarily cumbersome and complex
- lot of confusion about implementation of IHOG as it relates to FQS and Alaska operations
- created too many regulations and procedures
- bloated with too much policy/procedures - ever really looked at IHOG?
- add more WAE positions - increase the professionalism and retention of highly skilled personnel
- what is needed now is good on-site management

IV. Cooperating Agencies

A. Office of Aircraft Services

The roles and responsibilities of the OAS are clearly and properly defined.

Agree	43	(54%)
Disagree	28	(35%)
Don't Know	9	(11%)

Comments:

- role is changing, more administrative and less operational (good)
- OAS has internal problems between Regional and National Offices
- OAS in Alaska is doing a good job
- yes and no, depends on what section of OAS dealing with
- big leap here in last couple of years
- got a lot better since Elmer Hurd arrived (several similar comments)
- room for consolidation
- yes; see 112DM12 - may not be clearly understood by all
- take the mystery out of how flight hour rates are established
- not open to suggestions from field
- combine administrative functions with FS (payments, inspections, contracting, etc.)
- appears to be a breakdown in information exchange between OAS's Hq. Office and Area Offices [several similar responses]
- noted marked improvement in service
- OAS is re-defining some of these

Is there a difference in what you believe OAS is supposed to be doing for the aviation program and what is actually being done.

Yes	33	(44%)
No	29	(39%)
Don't Know	13	(17%)

Comments:

- OAS was originally intended to assist the Bureaus with the administration of the fleet and aviation contracting - it turned itself into a regulatory agency
- OAS should be a support function, providing administrative assistance
- progress in eliminating duplication (FS/FAA)
- gap is closing in AK, OAS is improving considerably
- OAS has sections that are not customer service orientated
- in past, felt OAS did not focus enough on service, but in Alaska they have started to be more responsive especially with fuel and contract issues
- OAS gets tied up in policy rigidity
- room for consolidation
- self serving, not service oriented
- usually have to fight with them in order to get them to do their job (AZ)
- OAS needs to be more proactive and involved with the field; follow up on training, assist during complex operations
- OAS should provide more support to fleet maintenance
- should be a service organization, not a policing organization [several similar responses]

Are there are any significant aircraft contracting problems in your State or District.

Yes	12	(18%)
No	37	(56%)
Don't Know	17	(26%)

Comments:

- service has been excellent
- getting contract spec's, solicitations and bids out seems to be very time consuming
- contracts are awarded very soon before notice to proceed or even after
- support in contract non-compliance is weak
- keeping things coordinated between FS and OAS takes work
- SEATs are a problem as OAS guidance constantly changes
- In AK, CA, and MT, contracting officers have sought innovative methods to obtain a/c services required
- lack of support in problem areas
- contracting telling the customer what they want
- excellent service from OAS contracting
- low bid process is outdated; award on performance

Are BLM and OAS duplicating any functions or activities.

Yes	36	(50%)
No	15	(21%)
Don't Know	21	(29%)

Comments:

- obligation and payment functions (23's & 59's)
- training (numerous similar responses)
- duplication and repetitiveness in various manuals
- check rides; BLM pilots are more experienced than OAS check pilots
- accident prevention role
- safety (numerous similar responses)
- getting much better
- BLM is doing the a/c maintenance management
- check rides for government leadplane pilots by OAS not necessary
- operational oversight
- OAS and FS are inspecting and setting two separate prices on the CWN a/c; very inefficient and confusing; vendors also want only one
- BLM hiring extra people to track costs that OAS is slow in providing
- OAS check rides for OV-10 pilots is ludicrous
- room for consolidation
- pilots and maintenance

B. Forest Service

Are there functional areas of opportunity within your Geographic Area or Nationally where we could integrate our operations with the FS.

Yes	48	(66%)
No	15	(21%)
Don't Know	10	(13%)

Comments:

- huge opportunity
- physically move FA, OAS, and BLM aviation staff together
- safety systems (reporting, investigations, data and trends) need to be consolidated
- see MOU for National Aviation Service Center
- single position lead for; AA/lead plane operations, smokejumper pilots, helicopter ops
- not in Alaska
- not in Nevada
- make all aviation assets part of a regional or national pool (BLM Districts currently have control)
- consolidate and integrate BLM/FS aviation at NIFC
- dispatching and coordination of admin flights
- co-fund and share helicopters
- lead plane/AA, smokejumpers, and radio systems
- BPA's (FS), BOA's (OAS)
- single contracting office
- charge codes are a constant source of problems, need a system with one charge code for all agencies
- Nationally, emphatically yes - should combine FS, OAS and BLM aviation staffs at NIFC (limited basis) - work for National Wildland Fire Aviation Coordinating Group
- doing it with interagency dispatch
- safety, training, contracting, payments, billings
- helicopters, airtankers, and air attack

Are BLM and FS duplicating any functions or activities that could be consolidated?

Yes	51	(70%)
No	13	(18%)
Don't Know	9	(12%)

Comments:

- almost all
- pilot training/use should be integrated
- aircraft contracting, inspections, certification [numerous similar responses]
- need to share resources at NIFC; bring Regional and State level programs into the picture also
- whole Fire and Aviation Program is duplicated
- two CWN aircraft source lists
- two different forms for payment and use
- carding of A/C by both (several similar response)
- some areas of exchange could probably be worked out
- should be working under a common "roof"- i.e., Elmer's National Aviation Service Center concept
- rental aircraft - have both outfits making the rounds all the time inspecting aircraft and pilots
- Need one procedure for renting a/c; FS has a too restrictive system
- ridiculous that we have different procedures/requirements for admin flights
- need one pay document for fleet, rental, etc.
- pilot development; competing for same limited resource, more efficient if we cooperated better

The National Interagency Long Term Retardant Contract is fully meeting our requirements.

Yes	31	(45%)
No	5	(7%)
Don't Know	33	(48%)

Comments:

- we should be able to get either LC or powder depending on our needs
- LC sure makes mixing an easier deal
- current contractor provides a product is labor intensive to mix (GJ Colo)
- current contractor provides a product which requires toxic chemical reporting (GJ Colo)
- can't see one of the products from the air
- multi year good
- current contractor is doing a good job (AK)
- only one of the companies has an effective LC; impacts of having to switch from one vendor to another is consequently a major impact

C. State Fire Organizations

Are there areas of opportunity within your Geographic Area where we should explore closer cooperative operations with the State fire and aviation organization.

Yes	40	(60%)
No	9	(13%)
Don't Know	18	(27%)

Comments:

- use of state airtankers outside of home state - CDF
- OV-10 ops and maintenance (CDF, Minn, Alaska, No. Carolina)
- states need to be in loop when major changes are proposed
- State/counties are still far behind in desire, training, equipment, etc
- we should do more, AFS is working closely with State of Alaska and Minnesota - and it works
- State policies need to be brought in line with Federal
- States continue to use OAS carded vendors without paying for the service
- fire planning
- Pressler Bill and IHOG have caused considerable consternation with State (Nevada)
- a real challenge to make it work
- federal agencies in general need to play a little more hardball with States when it comes to disposition of federal resources
- anything we do will cost us more and them less resulting in increased subsidization of States

V. Safety

Aviation safety oversight responsibilities are adequately defined.

Agree	49	(56%)
Disagree	29	(33%)
Don't Know	9	(11%)

Comments:

- who's responsible, BLM or OAS?
- will not succeed if a collateral duty
- no focus for safety
- not sure if line officers understand their responsibilities
- defined alright, just not done in practice
- National Office needs a full time safety manager
- we are not being proactive in safety at the National level- should count each day that we don't have an accident as "lucky"
- yes at the user level - but the higher you go, the foggier it gets
- true statement depending on where you are; have a hard time saying anything like that in States that have left their State Aviation Manager position vacant for months or years
- national level safety focal point needs to be established

How are these oversight responsibilities handled in your area?

- by FMO's
- too reactive - not proactive

Suggestions for improvement:

- put your money where your mouth is - fund some aviation management positions at the District level; classify PD's more than a GS-7 - this would send an important message and assure job actually gets done
- FS has full time safety managers, need to combine and support one position BLM/FS
- can't recommend a full time aviation safety officer in national office (based on past performance)
- contact with SAM is infrequent, does not address operational safety
- get out and work with users; "catch someone doing something right"

BLM Library
 Denver Federal Center
 Bldg. 85, OC-521
 P.O. Box 25047
 Denver, CO 80225

Non-fire aviation activities (law enforcement, cadastral, wildhorse, etc) are being given adequate levels of safety oversight and management.

Agree	27	(37%)
Disagree	29	(39%)
Don't Know	18	(24%)

Comments:

- might be a good time to do a Bureauwide evaluation of this to see how closely procedures are being followed
- poor job in oversight of Law Enforcement and service contracts
- wild horse program and law enforcement operations are good examples of where safety practices break down
- law enforcement probably violates regs, but who would know
- more closely watched by managers than fire and aviation
- law enforcement presents a unique challenge - secrecy of operations (need to know)- clearance for dispatchers
- not very much emphasis by the National Office
- tend to isolate themselves and seem to like it that way
- flight following requirements, etc., are inconvenient - results in wasted time and money searching for an "overdue" aircraft that isn't
- law enforcement is our greatest problem; doing unapproved activities in aviation
- easy to lose control over projects unless direct involvement

Do you have a serious air space coordination problem in your area.

Yes	29	(42%)
No	33	(47%)
Don't Know	8	(11%)

Comments:

- biggest safety concern is having a mid-air with non-fire aircraft over fires - need to do something now (air attack/leadplane pilot)
- lots of flying site-seers around fires (AK)
- National airspace coordination duties are not assigned appropriately; PNW Airspace Coordinator should be assigned national representation and responsibility; situation needs rectification immediately
- not a national problem, some problem areas, SW, Nevada (working on)
- southern California
- through interagency airspace coordination, risks have been significantly reduced
- have been several near misses with private a/c; public not getting info about a/c around fires (AK)
- dispatchers need more training
- with military when they are having increased operations (AK)
- yes in Nevada, even with all the effort that's gone on
- all aviation managers need to be on safety committees
- suspect it is a non-issue
- problem is severe here (Nevada); not receiving the attention it deserves
- airspace is getting adequate attention...back off on the "mid-air mania"
- yes we do, don't know if our SAM has received any support from National Office on this

Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the linkage between the Fire and Aviation Safety Program and the normal BLM Safety Program?

Yes	26 (40%)
No	31 (48%)
Don't Know	8 (12%)

Comments:

- take the first step, attend their meetings and invite them to attend ours
- mandatory aviation training for BLM safety managers
- don't need linkage, they're broke too
- don't see a problem
- aviation issues are not being addressed by general safety people
- BLM safety program could help brief employees on basic requirements of flight ops, safety, etc.
- fire management needs to be more open and receptive to regular Bureau safety officers; more sense of a team
- have BLM safety people attend aviation safety courses
- not sure we want to - this program is a dumping ground for excess people
- mystery to me why firefighters aren't being taught the basics anymore as they relate to aviation ops and communications

VI. General

Existing aviation policies and procedures are adequately defined and providing required direction for a safe and efficient aviation program.

Agree	54 (74%)
Disagree	12 (16%)
Don't Know	7 (10%)

Define any area where improvement is needed (please differentiate between the policies and the dissemination process).

- the policies are good and have stood the test of time - it's the implementation that needs attention and National oversight
- IHOG a good document need to do something similar for fixed wing (please no more acronyms and don't call it a guide if you mean for it to be mandatory)
- need to revise DOI Manual ASAP
- write aviation policies in clear text
- get new information to the field quicker
- IHOG
- aviation radio systems
- guides and guidelines by definition are not policy - if meant to be mandatory, should be "mandatory standard operating procedures"
- need an Interagency Aviation Manual and an Interagency Aircraft Scheduling and Dispatch Standard Operation Procedure
- focus needs to lie not in producing more policy statements, but in whether existing policies are understood and are capable of being implemented
- IHOG was a deception played on the field

Depict and define the existing aviation organizational structure in your State (to be answered by SFMO or SAO).

Existing: O-chart showing positions (PFT/WAE/Temp), organizational placement, and functions

Proposed: Delineate any changes you feel are necessary.

- aviation managers could easily cover two states if paired geographically MT+WY, CO+UT, AZ+NM, OR+ID, etc., NV, AK volume of business warrants stand alone
- as long as we have aviation managers that are dual-hatted, we will never have the operational oversight that the program demands

The non-fire aviation activities (wildhorse, cadastral, law enforcement, etc.) are being adequately managed in my area.

Agree	26 (42%)
Disagree	21 (34%)
Don't Know	15 (24%)

Comments:

- tend to get overlooked
- fire activity has an adverse impact on oversight

The amount of aviation funding is commensurate with the existing aviation organization.

Agree	7 (10%)
Disagree	36 (54%)
Don't Know	24 (36%)

Comments:

- we spend more \$ on lightning detection and computer programs than on the safety of our people in A/C
- move aviation funding into fire budget
- need full time year round pilots, can't expect to keep good, well trained pilots if lay them off when fire season is over
- because the Sherpa is cheap we are possibly settling for an inferior A/C
- inadequate prior to its inclusion in admin, now it's non-existent
- no aviation funding at District level
- need long term WAE appointments or can't keep good people
- underfunded for years; disappeared when it went to 1800
- benefiting activity concept only leads to in-house squabbling
- field see little if any aviation funding - going to admin
- severely underfunded
- makes a mockery of our emphasis on safety
- gets lost in administration

What was your aviation management dollar (1820) allocation for your state in FY-95? (to be answered by SFMO or SAM)

- about 25k, administration took the rest (out of 98k allocated to the state)
- 0 (UT)

(note: most didn't know)

To what degree are fire funds subsidizing non-fire aviation management in your State/Office?

- 50% of job is subsidized by fire
- fire funds all flight following and some training
- 95%
- user pays is a non-starter
- considerable
- over 90%
- almost 100%
- presuppression pays availability, even for non-fire resource missions

FTE ceilings are or have been a problem with filling aviation management positions.

Agree	31 (49%)
Disagree	13 (21%)
Don't Know	19 (30%)

Comments:

- numerous problems in states
- problem all over - the real question is which positions can we afford to not fill
- being asked to do more with no FTE or \$; unfunded mandate

We are filling our aviation positions with the best qualified people available.

Agree	24 (34%)
Disagree	28 (40%)
Don't Know	18 (26%)

Comments:

- qualifications are too often let slide to meet other management needs
- it's not just filling the positions, it's making sure the job is getting done after positions are filled
- still using these positions to hide people
- SAMs are inserted with no qualifications
- both FS and FWS have problems with low time pilots for special use missions - we don't need to make the same error
- aviation staff in AFS is top-notch
- collateral duties - not necessarily the best qualified or even the most interested
- not developing personnel; reactive not proactive
- too often aviation is a dumping ground
- remember the "no compromise for safety" buzzwords?
- needs to be a structured plan on how to get technical folks (pilots) trained for positions in our fleet aircraft

We need minimum qualification standards to be established for aviation management positions.

Agree	62 (86%)
Disagree	7 (10%)
Don't Know	3 (4%)

Comments:

- yes/yes/yes
- every state has a different PD, and uses different standards
- some of the best managers are not aviation professionals
- thought we already had them
- need standards so low-use states have equally qualified personnel as high-use states
- strongly; establish standards and stick to them
- it's a travesty that we have to hire unqualified people for any fire or aviation job, but it happens all the time
- folks with no or little knowledge set our program back
- there you go looking to make rules to solve a management problem; simply hire good people, but if you don't have good people hiring good people, it will always be screwed up

Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the development, recruitment, and selection process for aviation positions?

- key aviation personnel must have a strong fire background
- develop a pilot recruitment and training plan for smokejumper and air attack/leadplane programs
- a team of fire/aviation managers in-put on selections
- doubt it would make any difference, politics & political correctness is the reality
- need career ladders
- old problem of fire retirement coverage needs to be fixed
- operationally experienced field people - fire & aviation
- BLM has always been pathetic when it comes to helping an employee with career path & training/qual goals

There are opportunities to gain efficiencies and operational effectiveness by consolidating (geographically or functionally) managerial or technical aviation activities (nationally, Geographic Area, or locally).

Agree	49	(72%)
Disagree	9	(13%)
Don't Know	10	(15%)

Comments:

- consolidate functions nationally and at geographic area level
- consolidate regionally both intra and inter agency
- pool the OV-10 fleet & and detail out to states (lower-48)
- don't believe consolidation will help - have downsized aviation programs - not enough people for job
- integrate BLM/FS @ NIFC
- time is right for consolidation
- BLM/FS integrate at regional level
- current trend; becomes a fable at a certain point
- the big consolidation that makes sense is to combine the BLM and FS, but thought to be impossible by the powers that be
- fix what isn't working, centralizing is not a better concept
- assign lead roles among agencies; share staff among agencies, use interagency assistance teams
- combining state aviation functions, i.e., New Mexico and Arizona will water down operations oversight

If you could change or fix one thing in the aviation program, what would it be?

- better communications and coordination between aviation & coordinators/dispatchers
- make FS and Interior fire aviation policies the same
- more field presence by National Office
- more cross state/National Office communications- right now only may meet only once a year
- do away with interagency turf/territory
- consolidate Interior and FS
- put all BLM pilots and aircraft under one management; advantages would be in training, bringing up new pilots , and efficiency in utilization of pilots and aircraft - AFS would be best place, already have 2 of the 3 Sherpas, and 3 of the 6 OV-10's, & strong aggressive aviation management
- change attitude in field; too many comments like; get rid of helicopters and smokejumpers so engine crews can get more OT, let it burn it's not hurting anything, parroting politically correct statements and actions that put firefighters & pilots in jeopardy
- insure that the agency and interagency playing field is level
- FS/BLM separation and NIFC
- streamline a/c contraction; move away from low bid requirements and toward performance based awards & negotiated contracts
- clear the air on government owned aircraft issue
- top to bottom management; include aviation in management decisions, and support for corrective actions
- move the funding for aviation into the fire program
- raise grades for air service officer/helicopter mgr types
- don't TPR aviation to death, establish common sense policy, hire good people to implement, and get out of the way
- longer appointments for some District personnel
- get rid of Bureau aircraft fleet except in Alaska
- hire qualified people who have a concept of the total program and give them the funding and authority to do the job
- better customer service from the National Office
- standardize helicopter contracts with FS
- have one organization(BLM/OAS/FS)
- most of our experience resides in the field, not in central offices
- users know what they want and what they need; they just need assistance in obtaining it
- simplify regulations and reduce volume of them
- hire quality
- I would have the National Office take a true leadership role in setting national aviation policy and direction on an interagency basis... sick of BLM being pulled along by the nose ring on all important national interagency aviation issues
- disseminating information to the field and explaining new policies and procedures; we see guidance for the FS national and regional offices on a daily basis, but from our own national office only rarely
- tougher times are coming, we better make the most of our collective resources

VII. Other Comments or Issues

- BLM needs to get involved with the senior level aviation management course(instructor's & trainees)
- we tend to over exaggerate problems
- the resources OV-10 was originally equipped for drug surveillance and photo. In advertising this OV-10 use to the field offices, we may have misadvertised or misstated its primary functions i.e. "reconnaissance type missions". Probably 75% of its use has been for this type, but a few times BLM managers have tried to save \$ and use the OV-10 for a higher degree of accuracy than it is possible, and have not been satisfied. We need to upgrade this plane, equip it properly to meet BLM needs or cancel its use
- upper echelon of our aviation management structure isn't very productive in its' current state
- consolidate the pilot group at AFS or some other state and out of the National Office
- combine national staffs OAS, FS, & BLM
- fill vacant SAM positions with qualified people
- get the National Office to be proactive and address long-standing issues
- as budgets decline, we may pass a critical point with safe and effective air operations; this is a time when we need expanded air operations to save \$ not continue to cut
- current national emphasis is on fire; however, in the last 12 months we in the fire aviation community also lost 2 pilots in an airtanker crash in Montana, 3 aircrew in a crash of a C-130 in California, 1 pilot & 3 helitack crewmen in New Mexico, 1 leadplane pilot and 2 airtanker pilots in a mid-air in California - a total of 12. These however were not together and not all were government employees so the headlines were not as dramatic
- establish a National Fire and Aviation Service
- been in BLM since 1984, first time I've ever been asked questions like this.. think it is a good idea; provided some positive changes come out of it... process should be instituted on some sort of a regular basis...keeps national office in touch with the field and people doing the work. Feel it would make for a better organization overall, one that is more efficient, effective, and rewarding to the people who work in it.

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